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From: Richard Denison
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Subject: EDF blog post: In 2016 industry-funded paper, Dourson and Beck sought weaker standard for lethal paint stripper chemical

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In 2016 industry-funded paper, Dourson and Beck sought weaker standard for lethal paint stripper chemical

By [Richard Denison](#) | [Bio](#) | Published: October 26, 2017

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The *New York Times*' investigation "[Why Has the E.P.A. Shifted on Toxic Chemicals? An Industry Insider Helps Call the Shots](#)" published this past Sunday cited evidence that Nancy Beck – a political appointee in EPA's chemical safety office who until May was a senior official at the American Chemistry Council (ACC) – is questioning the need for EPA's [proposed rule](#) to ban the use of the deadly chemical dichloromethane (also called methylene chloride) in paint and coating removers. These products are responsible for [dozens of deaths](#) in recent years.

The *Times*' story also noted in its last paragraph that Beck and Michael Dourson – the Trump Administration's [controversial nominee](#) to lead EPA's chemical safety office – are co-authors on a [2016 paper](#) that was funded by ACC. That paper was published in the industry's go-to journal, *Regulatory Toxicology and Pharmacology*, where Dourson has [published most of his papers](#).

The paper is of interest and relevant for another reason as well: Dourson and Beck assert that the acceptable risk levels EPA has set for 24 chemicals are all too high and should be relaxed by anywhere from 2.5 to 150 fold. (Funny, isn't it, how the numbers for all 24 chemicals all went in the same direction?)

Among these 24 chemicals is the paint-stripping chemical dichloromethane (aka methylene chloride). This chemical is a particularly concerning one: It is a likely carcinogen and is linked to numerous other chronic health impacts, but it is also acutely and tragically lethal. Dourson and Beck call for EPA's standard for the chemical to be relaxed to a level that is 8.3 times less protective.

The *Times* article makes clear that, despite her prior work on this chemical while at ACC, and the fact that this chemical is made by numerous ACC companies, Beck has not recused herself from making decisions about its risk and regulatory responses – decisions that are being considered at EPA even as I write. Indeed, as I noted earlier this week, her astounding ethics agreement gives her wide latitude to work on issues in which ACC has financial interests in order to ensure those interests are taken into account.

In Dourson's nomination hearing held by the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee on October 4, he was repeatedly asked if he would, if confirmed, recuse himself from work on chemicals he had been paid by industry to work on, and he repeatedly refused to say he would do so.

One more reason that Michael Dourson should not be entrusted with our health and the Senate should reject his nomination to head EPA's toxics office.

Just yesterday, Dourson's nomination was voted out of the committee by an 11-10 vote. The fight over his nomination now moves to the full Senate.

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